



The Exceptional Advocate

A newsletter for military families with special needs

A LOOK INSIDE

Spouse Advocates for a Community of Spouses and the Exceptional Family Member Program.....	2
Immunization Requirements for Military Family Members.....	3
Emergency Preparedness and Your Family With Special Needs.....	4
Spotlight on: National Childhood Cancer Awareness Month.....	5
EFMP at Your Service: Raven Rock Adventure	6
Call to Action: Bloggers Wanted..	7
Coming Soon: The Exceptional Family Member Program Quick Reference Guide	8
Recommended Resources	9

Welcome Back to School!

Going back to school is an exciting time for the whole family. Each school year brings new teachers, friends and opportunities to try new things. Getting ready for the school year will not only help your child transition smoothly into a new routine; it can also contribute to the excitement and motivation that can help your child enjoy and succeed in school. The following are some tips to help you and your child prepare for the new school year.

- **Shop early for school supplies and clothes.** Shopping early will help you beat the back-to-school rush, and managing the cost of school supplies can be easier when it's spread over several weeks. Many schools offer supply lists on their websites, and school supply retailers often have copies of local schools' supply lists for their shoppers' use.
- **Save on back-to-school shopping.** Some states offer state tax holidays during which you may be able to save on clothing, shoes and other supplies. You can find a link to a schedule of all state tax holidays by visiting USA.gov. If you live on or near an installation, you can also save money by shopping at your local exchange. For more information, read the Military Community and Family Policy eMagazine article about the benefits of visiting the exchange for [back-to-school savings](#).

Back to School - Continued on page 7



Spouse Advocates for a Community of Spouses and the Exceptional Family Member Program

In July, 2012, *The Exceptional Advocate* article [Key Spouse Discusses Importance of Resources and Support](#) highlighted Air National Guard spouse Alicia Hinds Ward's advocacy for families with special needs in her role as Key Spouse and mother of three children with special needs. Since then, an organization has named Hinds Ward spouse of the year for her work supporting other military spouses and military families with special needs. In response to this national recognition, *The Exceptional Advocate* reached out to Hinds Ward, a longtime advocate of the Exceptional Family Member Program, for an update.

In her new role, Hinds Ward will continue to advocate for EFMP and seek to build a better sense of connectivity among branches of the military. "My goal is to empower spouses to know that better choices, education about services and the

knowledge of where to go for help make us a stronger military community," Hinds Ward says. She plans to leverage the existing networks of community leaders, leadership and families with special needs to create a central system of support for military families. Hinds Ward says that this effort will require collaboration with other branches and organizations, but she already feels encouraged by the support she has received.

Hinds Ward believes that the most important issue impacting military families with special needs as they relocate or as their loved ones deploy is a potential lack of emotional support for the family, particularly the caregiver. She believes this can be remedied through warm hand-offs — the coordination between EFMP offices to assist you in connecting services between duty stations — and by creating a military spouse network of support. Hinds Ward says that a military spouse

network of support can create a sense of community, foster communication and help disseminate knowledge of resources and support groups to relocating families. "We need each other to be more resilient and happy in this military life, and with 1.1 million of us, we can do just that."

In addition, Hinds Ward recommends EFMP family support services as a resource available to all EFMP families regardless of branch. "These specialized assistance resources have information regarding services throughout the community and are an excellent point of contact for referrals and information," Hinds Ward says. "I highly recommend speaking to one of these individuals as a point of contact and a tour guide to navigate the EFMP process, as well." To find the provider closest to you, visit [Military-INSTALLATIONS](#) and search "EFMP – Family Support."



Alicia Hinds Ward

Immunization Requirements for Military Family Members

August is National Immunization Awareness Month. This is an opportunity to highlight the need for improving national immunization coverage levels. Activities focus on encouraging all people to protect their health by being immunized against infectious diseases.

If your children get routine medical care from a military treatment facility or [TRICARE](#), or if they are in a military child care program or Department of Defense school, they're probably caught up on all required vaccinations. Defense Department policy requires immunizations as a condition of receiving these benefits. Adult family members enrolled in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System, or DEERS, may also be required to have certain vaccinations. If you're not sure whether you and your family are up to date, your primary care providers can check your records and let you know.

Vaccination recommendations and schedules

When it comes to which vaccinations your family needs and when they should have them, the military health system, child care programs and DoD schools all follow the recommendations of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices. The CDC's website on [Vaccines and Immunizations](#) is a great resource for the latest information on these recommendations. You can download a schedule of recommended vaccinations or create your own schedule for [children from birth to 6 years old](#). You can also find schedules and tools to determine vaccinations needed for [teens and preteens](#), as well as



Mark National Immunization Awareness Month by ensuring your family members' shots are up to date.

adults. Keep in mind that relocating to an overseas duty location may require all family members to meet additional vaccination requirements of the country where you will be living.

The Department of Defense Education Activity provides a handout of [immunization requirements](#) for parents of students in DoD schools. You will be expected to provide proof of immunization at registration or upon the request of school officials. Under the [Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children](#), participating states are required to give 30 days from the date of enrollment for transferring students to obtain any immunizations required by the receiving state.

Finding answers to questions

Visit the CDC Vaccines and Immunization website to learn about the [side effects](#) of specific vaccines, the [safety](#) of vaccines and

recommendations for people with [specific diseases or conditions](#). The [Military Vaccine Agency](#) is also a great resource for military families.

Primary source: [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

DID YOU KNOW



The Exceptional Advocate publishes inspirational stories and articles featuring information and resources of interest to military families with special needs and those who support them. Is there a topic you would like to see featured in a future edition? [Tell us what you would like to read about!](#)

Emergency Preparedness and Your Family With Special Needs

Hurricanes, wildfires, tornados and floods: these are some of the natural disasters that have brought destruction to numerous communities and disrupted the lives of thousands of Americans in just the past year. The frequency of these events reinforces the importance of being prepared for any emergency, including manmade ones like house fires, chemical spills and terrorist attacks.

As a military family member, you probably have experience preparing for moves, and you may have an emergency kit with basic supplies and important documents. But if you have a family member with special needs, will you be ready to provide essential care if you are suddenly without the following?

- Water
- Electricity, telephone and Internet access
- Heat or air conditioning
- Refrigeration
- Transportation
- A way to get prescriptions refilled or to buy needed supplies

Could you provide for your family member's needs if you were evacuated to a shelter or confined to your home? These are some of the questions to consider in making sure you're fully prepared to care for a family member who could be at greater risk in an emergency situation.

Preparedness information sources

September is National Preparedness Month, so now is a great time to make sure you have the basics of preparedness covered. The Federal Emergency Management



Are you prepared to provide for your family member's needs in the event of an emergency?

Administration, or FEMA, recommends that all Americans prepare for emergencies by:

- **Being informed** about the risks in their area and knowing where to get information in the event of an emergency
- **Making plans** for what they will do in different situations to stay safe and how family members will contact each other if separated
- **Building an emergency kit** with enough food, water and supplies to sustain their family for at least 72 hours

The [Military OneSource Disaster Resources](#) page, the [American Red Cross](#) and [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) all offer information on how to prepare for an emergency. But if you have a family member with special needs, you may need to do more.

Planning for special needs

The following tips can help you make your emergency plans for your family member's special needs:

- Have a conversation with your doctor about caring for your family member in an emergency.
- If your family member is in school or child care, find out how his or her needs will be met in an emergency. Consider storing extra medicines or equipment at the school or with your child care provider.
- Create and practice an escape plan for your home, making sure to address challenges for family members with mobility devices or with vision or hearing loss.
- Talk to the police and fire departments. It is important that they be aware of any combustible medical equipment that may explode in a fire, such as oxygen tanks. It is also important that they be aware if there is a family member who may not respond as needed in the event of an emergency, such as a child with autism who may hide instead of escaping from a fire or a person who may be unable to communicate their location.

[Emergency Preparedness - Continued on page 8](#)

Spotlight on: National Childhood Cancer Awareness Month

September is National Childhood Cancer Awareness Month. According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), cancer is the second leading cause of death among children between ages 1 and 14 in the United States. Although childhood cancer five-year survival rates have greatly improved in the past few decades, from 58 percent in 1975 to 80 percent in 2004, childhood cancer is still a major concern for our country.

Childhood cancer compared to adult cancer

Except in rare cases, [types of childhood cancer](#) are much different than typical adult cancers. Many adult cancers are linked to lifestyle or environmental risk factors. Cancer in children forms differently, is usually linked to changes in cell DNA and has little or nothing to do with outside risk factors. Aside from limiting your child's exposure to radiation, there is very little you can do to prevent cancer. Early signs of cancer in children are often difficult to detect.

Although early detection isn't always possible, it is fortunate that children tend to respond better to chemotherapy treatment than adults and have higher survival rates.

Early detection

Although early detection is difficult, it is not impossible. Keeping up with regular checkups is the first step in helping to keep your child healthy. In addition, watch for any of the following signs or symptoms that do not go away:

- Unusual lumps, swelling or easy bruising
- Unexplained loss of energy or paleness
- Ongoing pain in one area of the body
- Sudden vision or other eye changes
- Sudden unexplained weight loss
- Limping
- Unexplained illness or fever that won't go away
- Frequent headaches, often accompanied by vomiting

While these symptoms can be signs of cancer, more often they are caused by infection or injury. Make sure to have these symptoms checked by a doctor.

Treatment

Cancer treatments for children depend of the stage and type of cancer. Most cancers are treated with surgery, chemotherapy, radiation or a combination of the three. Most childhood cancers are fast-growing and therefore respond well to chemotherapy, which works by affecting rapidly growing cells.



Children's bodies are also growing rapidly and usually recover better than adults from higher dosages of chemotherapy. While higher doses of chemotherapy are more effective at treating cancer, they can have serious short and long-term side effects. Pediatric oncologists have to carefully monitor the treatments given to children to find the right balance between cancer recovery and side effect management.

Resources

More information on childhood cancer can be found online from the [National Cancer Institute](#).

Primary sources: [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) and [National Cancer Institute at the National Institutes of Health](#).

DID YOU KNOW



Childhood cancer affects caregivers, too. [Researchers estimate](#) that nearly 51 percent of mothers and 40 percent of fathers meet the criteria for acute stress disorder within two weeks of a child's cancer diagnosis. Parents who need assistance for stress can use non-medical counseling available through [Military OneSource](#) or get a referral by calling 800-342-9647.



EFMP at Your Service

Raven Rock Adventure

On May 31, 2013, the Fort Bragg Exceptional Family Member Program and the North Carolina Park Rangers hosted Raven Rock Adventure in Lillington, N.C. The outing allowed local military families with special needs to learn about indigenous plants, animals and their environment. The day's adventure started with a presentation by park rangers highlighting some of the animals and plants they might meet while out on their hike. After the presentation, families enjoyed a trail hike with the rangers and the opportunity to learn how to identify plants, animal tracks and wildlife. The hike ended at Campbell Creek, where families got to take part

in an actual creek study. Using mesh catch nets and cups, rangers gathered samples of wildlife from the creek and taught families to categorize the animals before releasing them in the creek. The creek study is a unique experience that is entertaining and educational for the families and beneficial to the parks department and the environment.

Rangers at Raven Rock State Park focus on making events accessible to families with special needs. For those who use wheelchairs, rangers coordinate with volunteers to transport people in all-terrain vehicles. Congratulations on your

successful event, Fort Bragg EFMP and North Carolina Park Rangers!

DID YOU KNOW



Fort Bragg isn't the only EFMP office holding fun family events. Contact your local EFMP office to find out what's on their calendar. To find your local EFMP office, visit [MilitaryINSTALLATIONS](#) and search "EFMP – Family Support."



Raven Rock Adventure, hosted by the Fort Bragg Exceptional Family Member Program and the North Carolina Park Rangers

- **Ease your child back into a school bedtime schedule.** Summer often brings later bedtimes for children of all ages. In preparation for the school year, make sure your child gets to bed earlier and wakes up at a set time so that he or she will be well rested. Start making bedtime changes a couple weeks prior to the start of the school year so you have plenty of time to gradually shift your child's bedtime and so your child has time to become accustomed to the new schedule.
- **Make the week before school a week to wind down.** Try to avoid planning any vacations or camps for the week before school starts. Plan fun, low-key activities, such as crafts or nature walks, to give your child a chance to fall back into a routine of being at home and to ensure he or she isn't worn out on the first day of school.
- **Plan healthy breakfasts, lunches and snacks.** Get a copy of the school lunch menu and plan in advance what days your child plans to buy lunch or pack lunch from home. Make a game plan for healthy home breakfasts, lunches and snacks with your child and create your shopping list. Get tips for healthy meal plans from the [United States Department of Agriculture](#) or from the [Defense Commissary Agency](#).
- **Make mornings easier by preparing the night before school.** Establish a routine of laying out clothing, packing backpacks and preparing lunches in the evening. This will make morning routines run more smoothly and provide less opportunity for delays caused by forgotten homework or missing socks.
- **Talk to your child about school.** While the beginning of a new school year brings a lot of excitement, it can also bring anxiety. Openly communicate with your

children about their hopes and fears for the new school year. Be positive. If they are nervous about school, have them name three things they are nervous about followed by three things they are excited about. Reassure them that you and their teachers are there to listen and fully support them throughout the entire school year.

DID YOU KNOW



Military OneSource specialty consultations on education can help you deal with topics such as tutoring, college admissions and more. A specialty consultation is an online or telephonic meeting between eligible individuals and specialists with education expertise. To schedule a consultation, visit [Military OneSource](#) or call 800-342-9647 and ask to speak with an education consultant.

Call to Action: Bloggers Wanted

Military OneSource is looking for military spouses with special needs or with family members with special needs to join its Blog Brigade. Military OneSource wants to share the great things military spouses are doing to help their families with special needs thrive and succeed. The Blog Brigade provides a great opportunity to celebrate your success and share your ideas with others.

Do you have a story to tell that other families can learn from? Have you managed a challenge that families with special needs are likely to struggle with? Or have you or your family members embraced a challenge or done something different that led to a new level of functioning or opening of new doors? Military OneSource would love to share your story.

For more information on submitting your blog, visit the [Blog Brigade on Military OneSource](#).



Join the Military OneSource
Blog Brigade!

Emergency Preparedness - Continued from page 4

- If your family member depends on home health care or requires frequent care at a treatment facility, ask providers how they handle emergencies and have a back-up plan to ensure continued care.
- If your family member is dependent on refrigerated medicine or on devices that run on electricity, you may need to have a generator. For information on safe generator use, visit [Military OneSource](#) and the [American Red Cross](#) and speak with your local EFMP office or Housing office if you reside on a military installation.

Your support network

During an emergency, community members naturally come together in support of each other. But if you have a family member with special needs, it's good to develop a support network before an emergency happens. Educate your friends, neighbors and relatives about your

family member's special needs, and show them where to find supplies and how to provide care in an emergency. If you have trusted neighbors, you might collaborate on a plan to shelter in place or evacuate together. Or you might work out a plan for how you'll communicate with each other and coordinate support in different emergency situations.

Your emergency kit

Create an emergency kit to meet the unique needs of your family. Start by making a list of everything that should be included. Ideally, the items you gather for the kit should be enough to last for two weeks. Your kit should include water and non-perishable foods, medications and medical supplies, special dietary foods and feeding supplies, electronic devices and chargers or batteries, any other non-electric equipment and documents such as care plans, current medical information and proof of service-animal status. It's a good idea to store your supplies in waterproof containers

and keep batteries out of devices until they're needed. Be sure to check your emergency kit every few months to update documents, replace water and make sure nothing has passed its expiration date.

Remember, an emergency plan is only good when everyone who will be affected by it knows and understands it. That's why it's important to talk often as a family about different types of emergencies and review your preparations for them. It will be important for everyone in the family to know how your family member with special needs is going to be cared for and what their individual roles and responsibilities will be.

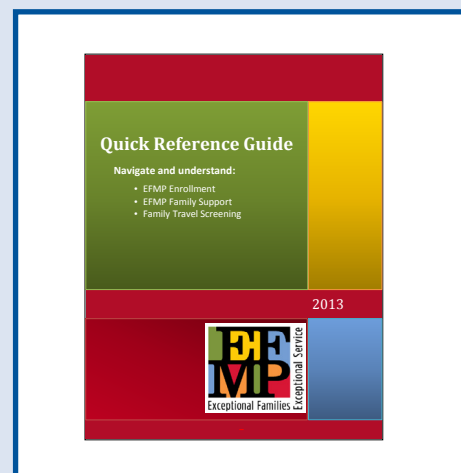
More information on emergency preparedness for families with special needs is available from [Military OneSource](#), [TRICARE](#), [Disability.gov](#) and [FEMA](#). FEMA also has a [brochure for adults with disabilities](#) on preparing for emergencies.

Primary Resources: FEMA's [Ready campaign](#) and [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

Coming Soon: The New Exceptional Family Member Program Quick Reference Guide

The Exceptional Family Member Program Quick Reference Guide is being developed for EFMP service providers by the Department of Defense Office of Community Support for Military Families with Special Needs in collaboration with the military services. The guide will assist EFMP service providers (personnel, medical and family support) by providing process descriptions, contact information and forms for each of the services so that all families, no matter their service affiliation, can be assisted with enrollment, family travel screening and family support.

The hope is that this guide will help standardize EFMP processes and enable family members to receive accurate, helpful information from EFMP service providers about EFMP processes no matter where they are located.



The Exceptional Family Member Program Quick Reference Guide for service providers is a new guide to navigating and understanding EFMP.

Recommended Resources

Special Needs Parent Tool Kit – Module 2: Special Education

Whether you have a child with a disability or suspect that your child may have a learning disability, the [Department of Defense Special Needs Parent Tool Kit](#) can help you navigate the special education system. [Module 2: Special Education](#) covers the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, key components of the special education process and links to other helpful resources. This module focuses on the special education process and how to transition your child to another state's school system.

Organizing School Records

Your children bring home a flurry of papers each week for you to review. What do you keep and what can you throw away? How can you organize records so you can find them when you need them? The [Organizing School Records video](#) can help you determine what to keep and how to organize it.

Education Directory for Children With Special Needs

As a military parent, you've probably already moved with your family. You know that you and your EFMP family support staff play a vital role in making sure your children continue to thrive in spite of changes and disruptions. Knowing more about the early intervention and special education services available in your new community can make that transition easier. Take some of the stress out of your next move by watching this video tutorial, [Education Directory](#)

for Children With Special Needs, then [visit the directory](#) to familiarize yourself with the resources in your new community before you get there.

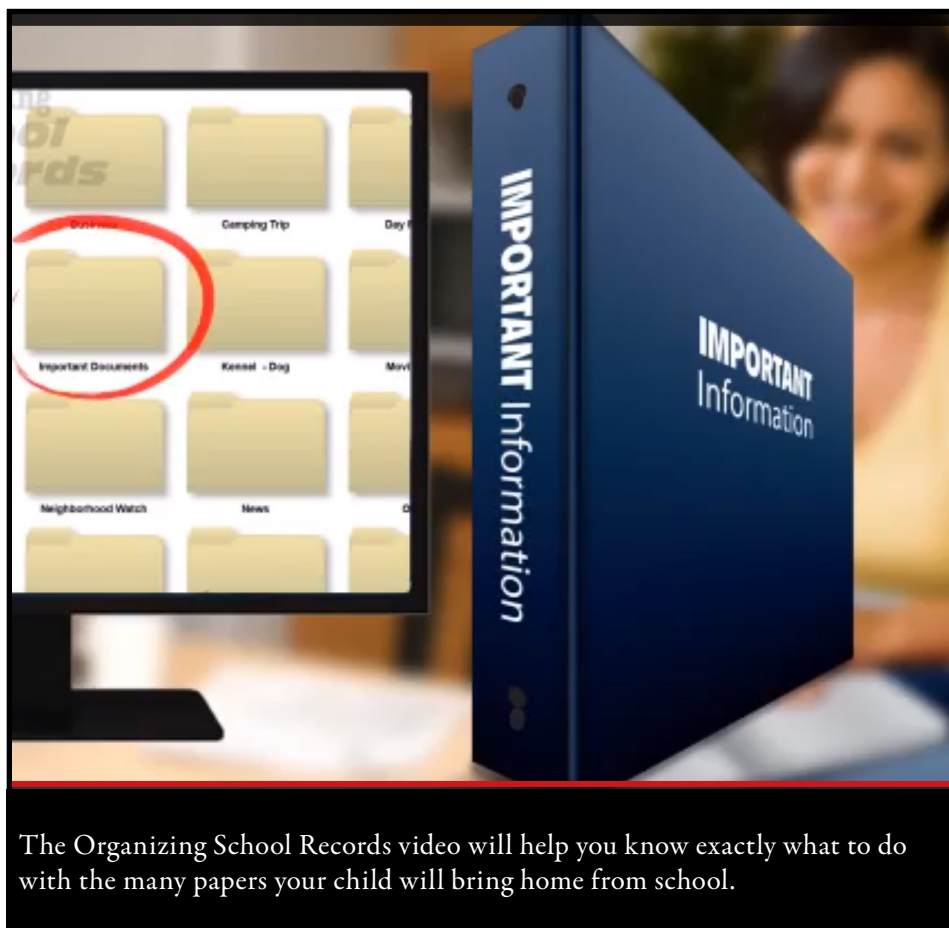
Moving with an Individualized Education Program

Military families face common concerns when moving with a child who has an individualized education program. This recorded webinar, [Moving With an IEP](#), explains the meaning of comparable services, what steps the new school will take when a child enrolls with an IEP and options available if parents, schools and other providers disagree on services.

DID YOU KNOW



Students with intellectual disabilities may be eligible for tuition funding from a federal Pell Grant, federal work-study programs and a federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant. You can learn more about these opportunities at [Federal Student Aid](#), an office of the U.S. Department of Education.



The Organizing School Records video will help you know exactly what to do with the many papers your child will bring home from school.



Created for you by the Department of Defense
Exceptional Family Member Program



[Click here to submit questions or comments](#) ● [Click here to subscribe](#)

The appearance of hyperlinks does not constitute endorsement by the Department of Defense of this website or the information, products or services contained therein. For other than authorized activities such as military exchanges and Morale, Welfare and Recreation sites, the Department of Defense does not exercise any editorial control over the information you may find at these locations.